



TESTIMONY
of the
CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE OF MUNICIPALITIES
to the
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

February 23, 2009

CCM is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local governments - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members represent over 93% of Connecticut's population. We appreciate this opportunity to provide testimony to you on issues of concern to towns and cities.

CCM opposes Proposed House Bill 5267 "An Act Concerning the Use of Funds Under the Small Town Economic Assistance Program for Projects that Convert Farmland to Other Uses"

This proposal would restrict the use of Small Town Economic Assistance Program funds for projects that would convert prime farmland.

CCM is a proponent of farmland protection and viability in Connecticut. To that end we created a Working Farms Task Force several years ago comprised of municipal officials, with an understanding of the needs of these businesses and the importance of the lands they occupy, to help direct CCM's activity and policy proposals in this area. This Task Force has been instrumental in directing CCM toward the creation and distribution of the publication "Planning for Agriculture" designed to assist municipalities and local boards and commissions examine their agriculture policies and guide them in making local decisions that support this industry. To introduce this guide around the state, numerous workshops and presentations were made to local officials, councils of governments, planning associations, farm bureaus, and many more. More than 1,200 people attended these various events and more than 4,000 guides have already been disbursed around the state.

However, CCM is concerned with any proposal that would usurp local authority to make decisions that best meet the needs of their community. While CCM certainly does not promote the conversion of farmland, we cannot assume to know what circumstances might arise in the future that would cause a municipality to have to consider such action. Instead of taking away a tool for municipalities, more education and resources for municipal officials with regard to farmland protection would serve the cause more effectively.

CCM urges the committee to **take no action** on this bill.

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If you have any questions, please contact Kachina Walsh-Weaver, Senior Legislative Associate of
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